

# Cruising in the North

*The word 'Arctic' conjures up images of polar bears prowling the ice floes, Inuit hunting in sealskin kayaks, of whales and whale hunting, the Aurora Borealis, and of intrepid explorers of history attempting to reach the North Pole or find a route from the Atlantic to Pacific Oceans through the Northwest Passage. In terms of what a visit to the Arctic means to an Audley traveller it is small-ship expedition cruising within the Arctic Circle (at 66°32' and beyond), within the Arctic Ocean.*



Musk oxen



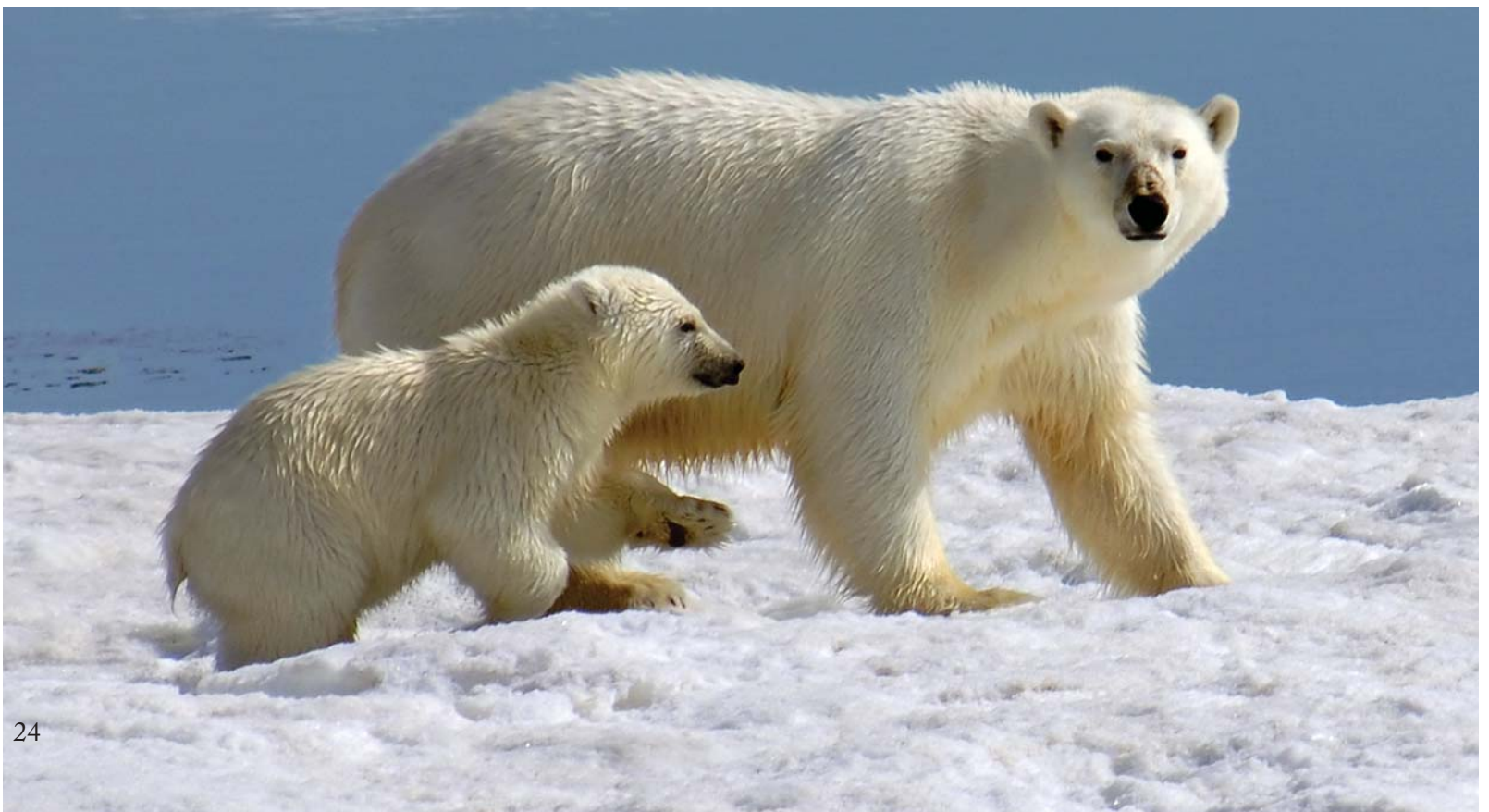
Three employees of Audley have journeyed to the Arctic region over the summer, including two of our Antarctica specialists who were so taken by the 'White Continent' that they decided to travel to the Arctic for a holiday. Upon their return they declared the sights at the top of the world to be equally as spectacular as those at the foot of the world.

So where to start if you are thinking of an Arctic trip? The expedition ships that ply the Antarctica waters come up to the Arctic regions in our northern hemisphere summer, and there they offer trips ranging from six days to two weeks. There are also occasional trips by ice-breaker that attempt to reach the North Pole. The cruise companies who operate these boats (such as Oceanwide Expeditions, Quark, Polar Star and Cruise North who are the only Inuit-owned expedition cruise company) have a selection of itineraries across the Arctic region, with varying highlights such as the Inuit capital of Iqaluit on Baffin Island (part of Canada), the Northwest Passage, the coast of Greenland, a circumnavigation of Norway's Svalbard archipelago and the far east of Russia. Many of the ships are re-furbished Russian research ships, some served in various navies, whilst

others were purpose-built for Polar exploration. The majority of them have been inspected by Audley employees and we can vouch for the simple comfort of their cabins and the quality of food. However, what stands out in particular is the intimate experience that is offered, enhanced by the presence of expert guides who accompany clients ashore on the daily excursions to share their knowledge and enthusiasm of the sights and sounds, the history and geology, the flora and fauna.

The trips experienced by our employees this summer were very different ones, as befits a massive area that has so much to offer. It is crucial that you take advantage of the knowledge that individuals who have experienced these cruises can offer you. Peter travelled to the eastern side of Baffin Island with Cruise North on the M/V Lyubov Orlova in August and it was a trip that was billed as a fascinating and unique insight to northern culture. The Inuit, of whom there were many as guides and lecturers onboard, have been in the far north for many thousands of years. They are descendents of the ancient Thule people who are thought to have followed game from Siberia across the frozen Bering Strait during the last Ice

Polar bear with cub





Adult male walrus

Age and whose language has infiltrated ours with everyday words such as kayak, parka and anorak. His on-board experience included talks covering all aspects of Inuit life, history and belief systems as well as a wonderful demonstration of Inuit sports and throat singing, providing an unparalleled insight into the people of this northern land. Peter's on-shore experiences included the rugged vistas of Baffin Island's towering sea cliffs, jagged mountain peaks, ice-fields and glaciers. Underfoot, lay delicate wildflowers and heathers spread out in a sporadically colourful carpet and valley floors swathed in vibrant green as mosses and marsh enjoyed their brief season of abundance.

Whilst Peter started his trip in Kuujuaq in northern Québec, Phil Chanel (one of our Antarctica specialists) started his in Longyearbyen, on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen. This trip was a ten day circumnavigation (pack ice permitting) of Svalbard on the (possibly too hastily named) Antarctic Dream, operated by Oceanwide Expeditions. Highlights of this trip included a very close encounter with a curious polar bear (he sniffed the side of the boat), a Sunday afternoon spent watching fin whales (the second largest animal in the world) feeding, witnessing a gloriously fat group of walrus try to get comfortable piled up together on their beach, and experiencing the first sunset of the summer

on August 26th. Birdlife galore, seals, bowhead whales, the eerie remains of the whalers' haul of beluga whales, and a couple of shore excursions cut short by the nearby presence of polar bears combined to make the trip a memorable one.

All of the journeys to the Arctic region will have an abundance of ice and glaciers; your interests (whether they be wildlife-based, culture based, adventure based, or a combination of all of the above!) and time available will then help us to work together to choose the most suitable cruise for you.

**Peter Stanley-Jones** (Regional Manager –The Arctic) & **Carolyn Foreman** (Programme Manager –Antarctica)



M/V Lyubov Orlova

## FACT FILE

An eleven day trip to Canada including the all inclusive, eight day Baffin Adventure cruise, two nights boutique hotel accommodation in Montreal, all flights and taxes would cost from £4150 per person. This could be incorporated into a longer trip, tailor-made to your own requirements. For details please contact our specialists on 01993 838 715.

